

Into the Light

by Lamech

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> <meta name="Generator"> All the characters of "Angel" were created and are owned by Joss Whedon

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Note: This story takes place immediately right after "I've got you under my skin" ended.

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INTO THE LIGHT

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In the dark, Wesley sat on the edge of his small bed, dressed only in his gray blue boxers. His body was doubled over and his hands were grabbing at the roots of his hair.

He was having trouble falling asleep.

After the whole ordeal with the boy, Angel proclaimed that everyone was to have a three-day paid vacation in order to recuperate as of that moment. Dealing with a boy who was possessed by a demon who was in turn possessed by the boy was nothing to brush off just over night. Cordy greeted the chance with squeal of delight as she was dropped off at her apartment.

"Guys, I love you to death, but don't bother calling because I'm out of here," the young woman proclaimed as she leaned into Angel's window, "I'm going to the Hills with Monica for a party this weekend. Bash-o-rama. Tons of directors and casting agents. Who knows, maybe come Monday I'll be famous."

Angel gave the girl a sincere look. "Good luck."

Wesley nodded in agreement, "Yes, good luck, Ms. Chase." There was a hallow coldness to his voice that made Cordelia shiver.

She looked at the young man, opened her mouth as if to say something but shrugged it off. She smiled, "Wes, take care of that wound, ok?"

The young man responded with an, "I will," as he felt the bandages that were covering his neck. He could feel that it was already caking with old blood. _That crucifix went in quite deep. If it just punctured a few centimeters lower than I would have died. But I'm all right now. The most I will end up with is a scar. Another scar to add to the collection. _

"She's right, you know."

Wesley blinked and realized that the caddie was halfway down two blocks from Cordy's place. His mind was elsewhere thinking a million things to notice the passing world around him. Still his proper instincts made him react with a, "Yes?"

"Your bandages. We should have them cleaned up before you get home. I have some extra bandages and antiseptic ointment back at my place. I think we should get you fixed up."

Wesley stared off in the distance. His eyes were half closed as if he was somewhere between dreaming and thinking. Forever lost in thought.

Angel sighed, "Wes!"

The young Brit stirred in his seat as he just turned his gaze to the vampire. "Yes?"

"This is the part where you nod your head and say, 'Yes, Angel, what ever you say'."

Wesley looked at Angel with a vacant hallow eyed stare. There was a silent, uncomfortable moment of time between them. Wesley's face contained no emotion. He looked more like an animated corpse than a living being. If Angel still had breath in him, he would have held it. He knew that face all to well. He had seen it a million times in his own reflection in a time so long ago.

Wesley suddenly felt the hair on the back of his neck start to stand on end. He knew what exactly Angel was thinking and it was sending chills down his spine. The young man turned away and spied on the world on the other side of the window, "Yes, Angel, what ever you say."

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Angel leaned back to look at his work. The clean up wasn't pretty but it did the job. The bandage was a little smaller this time and it easily could be hidden by Wesley's shirt collar. Too bad that his shirt collar was caked in blood. Normally Angel's mouth would have been watering at the mere smell of such an odor but for some reason or another his stomach turned with every inhale.

The young man was still sitting there quietly. He stared at his folded hands that rested on the kitchen tabletop. The only difference this time was he was smiling. An obviously forced smile brought out for display for Angel's benefit.

Angel threw out the dirty bandages and looked at his kitchen. He was searching for something to say. "Hey, look," he said as he skirted across the floor and grabbed a pan from the sink. "Cordy left her brownies. Are you brave enough to try one?" He shook the pan. Suddenly the brownies flipped out of the container and hit the floor with a dull and ugly "thunk".

Angel looked at the mess. The food was still holding in one piece and if he wasn't mistaken, it had made a dent in the floor. Angel blinked in amazement. _As a cook that girl is horrible, but as a brick maker, I'd hire her. _

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Wesley pulled back from his chair, "The sun is coming up soon, I shouldn't keep you awake. Thank you for everything."

"Wait, Wes," Angel said as he gathered up the brownie block, "Stay for a while. I'm not tired." He peered at Wesley just from over the tabletop.

The young man put on his jacket and felt his pockets for change. He had enough to catch the bus. "No, I've troubled you enough. Uhm, I think I will use those three days to goâ€¦just to go." He turned and started to head out the door.

"Wesley, as a former Watcher, I know you have read up on my history. But the Council doesn't know everything about me."

Freezing in his steps, Wesley swung around. His eyes narrowed, examining the vampire in every detail. This vampire, who barely said a word much less a complete sentence, was willing to tell him his entire story? Angel had his interest.

The vampire took a seat on one side of table. With his foot he leaned over and nudged the chair on the other side to back up from its space. An open invitation to sit down. The young man hesitated, waiting for Angel to say something else.

"Before I was a vampire, my father, of sound body and mind, would call me the "devil on earth"." Angel cast his gaze away from Wesley. He licked his lips. His throat was becoming drier and drier with every word.

"There wasn't a day that went by that he failed to tell me this. One time when I wasâ€¦. I had to be no older than ten, if I remember right, he grabbed me by the hair, dragged me to Saint Bridget's and almost drowned me in holy water. That's what he did. He took me to the basin and held my head under. I could feel the very life being pulled out from me.

"Cleansing the Soul," he called it. Thank God, that Father Carroll saw this and pulled him off of me. But that wasn't the end of my good religious penance." Angel gazed up to see Wesley looking at him with utter horror in his eyes. The vampire knew he was dredging up memories in the young man. Angel shot his gaze back down to the empty chair. A moment later Wesley was sitting down in it.

"Then there was the week I went without food. "Fasting for God." The kneeling on broken glass for prayer. "Pain is the path to the Lord." And then there was the time he forced me to wear nothing but a burlap bag for Lent. To give me "humility". But then something happened. I grew up. I was taller and larger than he was. Too big to really do his work, so, he would just slapped me around and belittled me then. Punishment one way or another."

Angel became silent and Wesley understood why. It was his turn to tell his story. _Share the pain,_ one therapist told him many years ago, _and it will lessen. _But Wesley didn't want to share. He couldn't. Every pore in his body told him to flee, to make a break for the door. He could hear his father's voice creep into his skull, _Run, little rabbit, run. _

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Carefully, Wesley looked back at Angel. The vampire sat there, across from him, determine to drag the story out from the man. Suddenly Wesley's hands began to shake. They banged against the hard tabletop. Realizing this, he shoved them into his lap. Angel sat up; his eyes opened wide in shock.

"Wes?" His voice was soft, "Wesley?"

The young man pushed his glasses up and rested them on his crown. The world around him became blurry and easier to take in. With a quick, unsteady breath, Wesley began. "Up until I was fourteen my family lived in Manchester. During that time my father would beat and belittle my mum, brother and me. He did this according to him for many reasons, but the most was because he could.

Then one day, while father was at work, mum had us pack as much stuff as we could carry and we took a bus to London. We moved from a rather large cottage house to a spit of a flat just outside of Angel station." Wesley looked at the vampire with a deadpan look, "And that is my story."

Angel's brow knitted as Wesley arose from his seat. The man's hands were still shaking, only now they had been drawn up into angry fists. It was obvious that the Wesley was using every bit of strength in him to contain his emotions.

Watching the young man walk out of the kitchen, Angel called out to him.

Wesley froze but did not turn this time.

"That can't be it. That can't be the end," Angel said in a voice that pleaded with the man to return.

Wesley shook his head as if he was having an inner conversation with himself and he didn't want to obey what ever the voice was saying. He straightened up in his usual starchy British fashion. Still refusing to look back at the vampire, he spoke, "That is the end." And with that Wesley walked out of the apartment.

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And now he was sitting at the edge of bed, wondering why he couldn't bring himself to tell the vampire the whole story. He wanted to. He so wanted to.

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But would you have told him everything. Yes, he has seen his own share of horrors but would you have told him all over yours? Wesley bit his lip and nursed on the pain. Would you have wanted him to see that side of you? Would you have liked him to know everything?

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Would you have whispered to him about mum's forced abortions? All nine of them, because Father said he would have taken a coat hanger to her if she didn't go to a doctor to have them done. Would you have told him about how mum would cry in your arms for your lost brothers and sisters?

Would you have spoken to him of your brother's welts and bones that would break every few months? Or of the bruises that painted his skin a little too often to be ignored? An accident, you would tell his teachers. Always covering up the truth. You were so good at that.

Perhaps you could tell Angel about that time that you spent four months locked under the stairs? Or how your food, which were nothing more than dirty scraps, was thrown at you because Father didn't want to touch a pathetic rabbit such as yourself. Remember there was no sanitation to speak of. Or how about that rash that covered your body with open sores that ached and itched and drove you mad. And if you dared to cry, oh, if you dared. Scars can fade but never completely.

You were so weak when you came out, remember? Bones so brittle that they broke the first time you tried to walk out of that cubbyhole. And that was your own fault, he told you, your own fault that your bones broke. He forced you back into that hole for another week as a punishment for being such a rabbit.

You were to be tough. Never to show pain. Never to show emotion. Never to be.

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Wesley gazed up at the ceiling of his studio flat. His eyes felt so dry that they were beginning to hurt. _Even now you can't cry. You can shed useless tears for everything else, sad movies, sad shows, sad music. But when it is your own pain, you can't bring yourself to do it. Training of his that will never leave you. _

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He shut his eyes tightly, trying to make them well up. But he couldn't bring himself to cry. His body betrayed him. He let out a whimper and buried his face in his hands. Inside, he felt dead. _What is wrong with me? Why can't I let it go?_

Raising his head, he looked at his own reflection from the dresser mirror on the other side of his mock bedroom. Without his glasses all the young man could see was a blurry figure staring back at him. The figure was a whisper of a creature. It slouched over in its place, as if it were trying to hide from something. Wesley straightened up. The creature in the mirror mimicked him. The young man stood and so did the creature. He approached the mirror until he could make his own face in the creature's form. His eyes were blood shot and sunken. His mouth was drawn in a horrible expression that was both a frown and snarl of terror. With delicate fingertips he touched the cool surface of the looking glass. He just couldn't believe that the creature, that sad, little_ rabbit _of a being, was himself.

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Is this what you want to show Angel? Or Cordelia? And would they understand? Would they even care?

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He placed his back to the mirror and looked at the trappings of his studio flat. His eyes drifted to the one small closet in the entire flat. _Why should they care really? You don't even care. You can't even let go of a few memories. _The door to the small space was open. To the man the closet suddenly took on the appearance of a monster with a yawning mouth. _Can you even let those memories go even if you wanted to? Look at the closet. Isn't it the same size as the cubbyhole? _Wesley felt his body rise to his feet and slowly walk across the floor. _Could you stay in that closet without screaming bloody murder for even a second? _

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Slowly Wesley pulled out a sweater out from the closet, and then a shirt and then a pair of pants. With every piece of clothing his pace picked up until clothes were flying everywhere. His breath became heavy and labored. His muscles ached and brain throbbed with a wild fever.

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I can do this. I can do this. Oh, God, I can do this!

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The last item in the closet flew across the room and landed on his bed. Wesley looked over his shoulder at the mess and then at the hollow shell that was the closet. Grabbing the doorframe, he held himself still. Now he was gasping for air like a dying fish. _God, give me strength. _Wesley closed his eyes tight and tried to imagine himself somewhere else._ _Slowly he slipped one foot in the closet and then the other. Clumsily, his hands felt for the back of the closet. When he touched it, the young man turned around and sat down. He drew his legs to his chest and opened his eyes into half slits. The door was still opened. It would have to be shut in order for the challenge to work.

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I can do this. I just have to reach out and close it. I'm stronger than this. I'm stronger than he was.

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With his right hand, the Wesley leaned foreword and took hold of the bottom of the door. Gently, he brought it towards him, slowly killing the light that the outside room bathed him in. His muscles started to tense up with every disappearing inch of the swinging door. He let go and rubbed his shoulder with his free hand. Looking at the door, Wesley knew he had to finish this.

He grabbed the edged and slammed it shut, barely missing his fingers. Wesley's eyes snapped open to see a blanket of nothingness spread out before him. Gasping for air, he took his hands and buried them in his hair. His body began to feel like it was covered with pins and needles. He started to whimper in spite of himself. Frighten whines escaped through clenched teeth. His body began to rock as it drew up in an upright fetal position. A few strands of hair fell from his hands. He was pulling out his hair.

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No. No. Fight it. Fight the instinct.

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He shoved his hands between his knees. The pain of his nails beginning to scrape flesh there shocked his system. The young man felt his teeth sink into his bottom lip as he tried to keep himself in control. And all at once everything snapped. His legs kicked open the door and he ran out of the vacant shell. He screamed in horror as he dropped to his knees in a pile of discarded clothing. Clenched fists pounded the floor in disgust. Wesley sobbed but his eyes were still dry.

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Damn you.

God damn you.

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Wesley sat up and wiped his bloody lip. His body ached like he had

gone to battle and back. He didn't want to think anymore. Or to feel, for that matter.

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Just ignore it. You're used to it.

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He gathered up the clothing around him. They smelled. Dirty no doubt. No matter he had three days to do his laundry. Three days to be alone. With that he threw his clothes back in closet.

Suddenly there was a knock at the door.

"No," the young man whispered in a hoarse voice, "Go away. There's no one here. No one here that matters."

Another knock thundered though out the flat.

Wesley stood still and eyed the door. He shook his head. Grabbing another pile of clothing, Wesley went back to his chore.

A third knock came followed by a small rat-tat-tat, gunfire of pounding.

Who ever it was, wasn't going to give up that easily.

The young man threw down the shirt in his hands and stormed to the front door. He threw it open, "WHAT?!?"

There stood Angel, with a brown bag in one hand and his other hand in a raised fist as if he was going to give the door a few more poundings. He shuddered for a second out of shocked. Then he realized that Wesley Wyndm-Price, one of the starchiest human beings that he had even known in his entire life was standing before him half naked with just a pair of boxers on. Angel's mouth dropped open in utter surprise and he could feel his cheeks burn with blood he had for dinner. He shook the shock off and looked Wesley in the eyes.

"Couldn't sleep," he raised the bag to eye level, "Brought breakfast."

The young man still stood at the doorway. His face still held the stonefaced expression. "You don't eat."

"Yes, I don't," Angel said in a matter of fact voice, "But you do."

Wesley's face suddenly became soft as he realized that Angel just came over for no other reason than just to be friendly. The young man felt foolish. He put on a smile. "What is it? Doughnuts? Bagels?"

"Scones."

The young man let out an excited gasp as he snatched the bag up. "Scones! Oh, I haven't had scones since I moved to L. A.! They're so hard to find out here." He began to head towards the kitchen part of

his flat, leaving Angel still standing at the door. "All I can find here are bran muffins. And it isn't the same. I'm going to make tea. It just wouldn't be proper to have scones without tea. Angel, which would you prefer, green tea or mint?"

"To tell the truth, Wesley, I would rather be able to come in."

The young man looked back in puzzlement. Tapping on the invisible force that held him from coming in the room, Angel gave the man a sour stare.

Wesley paused for a moment. A rush of thoughts ran through his head. _He thought of the boy's words. _Is he right? Do I fear Angel that much? Do I have a reason to be?_ _Can I trust a vampire? What if he became evil again? What would happen then? _The young man shut his eyes. He was doing it again. He was making excuses to push people away. _You have to let the wall down sometimes. _Wesley opened his eyes and smiled. He waved the vampire over, "Angel, I invite you in."

He waltzed the vampire, taking in the entire loft in. Wesley had divided his living quarters up with silk-screened panels. A touch of class on a shoe string budget. The rest of the loft that Angel did see was immaculate.

"Nice place, Wesley," the vampire said as he came to the kitchen part.

The young man settled the teakettle he had in his hands on the stove. "Thank you. I know it isn't much but it's mine."

Angel nodded in approval. He then motioned to the young man clothing, "And, oh, yes, nice boxers, too."

Wesley scrunched up his brow, "Hmm?" His legs suddenly began to feel ice cold as he looked down. Instantly Wesley realized what he was wearing or _exactly not wearing_. "Good Lord!" He turned the range on and told the vampire to watch the pot. Then he was gone, vanished behind one of the decorated panels.

Angel had never seen a man turn that beet red before. A moment later Wesley appeared in a pair of pleated Dockers and a black Siouxsie & The Banshees shirt. The vampire raised his brows at Wesley's choice of wardrobe.

"It's the only clean thing I've got at the moment. And I found the shirt in the closet when I moved into the flat," the young man explained.

Angel held back a laugh as he opened up the brown paper bag full of scones. He took them out and placed them on top of the flattened bag. "I'm not sure, but I think they're blueberry."

"Blueberry!" Wesley hummed as he picked one up and took in its aroma.

It smelled wonderful. He took a bite of it. And it had a taste to match. He slipped into one of the kitchen table chairs in total bliss. Angel sat down as well.

"Wesley?"

The young man gazed over to the vampire. Angel has a dead serious look that Wesley didn't care for. Wesley swallowed the hunk of scone that was in his mouth.

"What is it, Angel?"

The vampire gazed away from the young man. "Last nightâ€¦I'm sorry about pressing you for info-."

"Don't worry about it," Wesley interrupted before Angel could finish. He took another bite of the pastry. That was the end of that.

Angel sighed in relief. He arose to his feet and walked over to the stove. He opened the top of the kettle and looked at the simmering tea. "My mom would make the best scones when I was young. The neighborhood kids would come over for tea and she would bake a batch right up for everyone."

The vampire looked around and found the sugar pot on the other end of the counter top. "Sometimes I really miss being able to eat and enjoy solids."

"Yes. Well, mum was never really a cook," Wesley stated between bites. "Though she could-"

Wesley was suddenly interrupted by a knock at the door. The two men looked at each other. Angel motioned towards the door. Wesley shrugged. He didn't have a clue to whom it could be. He got up and sneaked over to the door. Angel followed close behind.

Another knock came.

The young man opened the door a bit and peered out.

Cordelia glared back, "Jeez, Wes, paranoid much? It's just me!"

"Cordelia?" the young man said in shock as the girl let herself in.

The girl gave the place the once over. She was impressed. She didn't think Wesley had this much taste in him. In fact she once doubted he had taste in anything other than what was hip on Masterpiece Theatre. She turned her attention back to Wesley. She almost did a double take when she saw what he was wearing.

"Laundry day," Wesley said sheepishly.

"Uh-huh," the girl hummed. She looked at Angel with a bit of surprise, "What are you doing here, Mr. I can't go outside to get a tan 'cause I'll go 'poof'? Isn't it past your bedtime?"

Angel started to head back towards the kitchen, "I couldn't sleep and I used the sewers to get here." He grabbed the oven mitt that hung over the stove and placed the kettle on the back burner. "And I can say the same for you. What are you doing here? I thought you had your weekend all planned out."

Cordelia grabbed a seat on one side of the table as Wesley took one from the other side. She placed her elbows on top and rested her head in her open hands. "Yeah. I had plans. But plans went ka-blewy. Now, I have no plans. Also, I couldn't sleep. I don't know about you guys, but it's hard to get your beauty sleep when you've just lived through "The Exorcist" and "The Bad Seed" sans the pea soup and annoying gardener."

Wesley and Angel nodded in agreement.

Cordelia carried on, "I thought I'd come over to see how you were doing, Wes. How is the wound?"

He had almost forgotten about it in all the ruckus. His hand reached up and felt the bandage; "It's coming along."

"That's good. But just in case you were feeling bad I brought brownies!" She held up a large brown paper bag. By the look of it, the bag was filled to the top.

Wesley faked a pleased grin. "Oh, look, Angel, Cordelia brought over some of her brownies. Is that notâ€|" He searched for the right word. _Disgusting? Repulsive? Revolting? Stomach wrenching? _"...lovely?"

Angel went back to the kettle, facing his back to Cordelia. "Yes, lovely." His face twisted in a snarl. But then he remembered he didn't eat and that Wesley did. _Poor Wesley, hasn't he suffered enough already?_

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The girl rolled her eyes. "Sheesh, can you guys lie any worse? Don't worry, you can drop the Def Con alert. I picked these up at the corner bakery."

The young man's face suddenly lit up. He took the bag and smiled. "That was very kind of you."

"Yeah, that's me, heart of gold."

Wesley went to his cupboards and handed Cordelia his tea set. Angel grabbed some napkins and helped the girl set the table. They all talked about Cordelia's up and coming auditions and Wesley's laundry chores. It was when they were all sitting, with Angel sipping tea and Wesley and Cordelia eating scones that the young man paused. He looked at the two people before him. They could have been anywhere in the world right now, with a million other people. Nothing held them back. But instead they were with him, in his humble home. That was where they wanted to be the most. They wanted to be with him. He wasn't sure why. But he didn't care. He smiled softly.

"Wes?" Cordelia paused and looked at the young man with the dreamy gaze. "You seem to be off somewhere else." Her eyes narrowed in concern. "Are you alright?"

Wesley glanced back and forth between the girl and the vampire. They were waiting for his answer. He nodded. "I am. Thank you."

The two smiled back as they understood the statement's deeper

meaning. And with that they went back to discussing life over tea.

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file.